DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 579 CS 215 944

AUTHOR Goncalves, Wande Knox
TITLE The Underground Railroad: Developing a Literary Track to Slave Narrative.
PUB DATE 1997-03-00
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference and Exhibit of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Baltimore, MD, March 22-25, 1997).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black History; Civil Rights; Class Activities; *Freedom; Grade 3; Lesson Plans; Primary Education; Racial Discrimination; Racial Relations; *Slavery; *United States History
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; *Slave Narratives; *Underground Railroad

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a method of bringing to third-grade students an understanding of African-American contributions to the United States, the experience of slavery, and the struggle for freedom on the secretive Underground Railroad. The paper contains a list of eight primary sources to be used. Its lessons focus specifically on the skills necessary for a slave to successfully run to freedom, the inner workings of the Underground Railroad, the specialized knowledge of the runaways, and the major conductors along the line. The paper suggests 7 days as the number of class periods for the lessons. It gives a brief description of the activities, day by day, which include outside homework projects, the reading of specific stories, and student research and written recording of narratives collected. The paper also suggests extended enrichment activities. Contains 11 references. (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 410 579

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD:

Developing A Literary Track to Slave Narrative

Wande Knox Goncalves, Mentor Teacher
Birdilee V. Bright Elementary School

Lessons prepared as a result of a grant given to the University Research Library-Special Collections Unit for the purpose of bringing the resources of the Special Collections to California public school teachers and classrooms.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. Goncalves

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 215944

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

GENERALIZATIONS:

- Not all history is written.
- The oral history of a people is an important way to share important events of the past.
- Narrative allows students to appreciate the struggles of real people.
- Narrative became a means for runaway slaves to share their experiences and information about the Underground Railroad.
- Narrative became a means for slaves to share the specialized skills necessary to run for freedom.
- Primary sources are direct insights to the past.

FRAMEWORK:

The California History/Social Science Framework emphasizes the importance of history as a story well told. The study of history can be presented as a dramatic series of events in the past that shape the present. While assessing the social, economic, political, and cultural context of events, good storytelling in the form of narrative is a source of motivation and purpose in the study of history.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to create narratives from another person's oral telling of an important event in their lives .

Through the use of primary sources students will value the literary genre of narrative and this form of recording history.

Primary sources will allow students to appreciate the ingenuity and struggles of real people who had no access to traditional resources for telling their history.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Sources underlined are from the Special Collections Library.

Hamilton, Virginia. "Carry the Running Aways", *The People Could Fly: Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave, 1988.*
Many Thousands Gone., 1993

Bial, Raymond. *The Underground Railroad, 1995.*

Rankin, John. *Letters on American Slavery, 1838*

Still, William. *The Underground Railroad, 1872.*

Commire, Anne, ed. *Something About the Author*, Volume 56, 1989, Virginia Hamilton, pp. 60-65.

Brandt, Paula. "Passing Stories On", *Book Links*, March , 1995.

Seibert, Wilbur Henry, "History of the Underground Railroad in Ohio", pp. 136-150. *Ohio Archeological and History Society*, 1956.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BACKGROUND:

The third grade curriculum includes the study of the United States and its diverse population. The ongoing theme of many people and many lands, develops an appreciation for the talents, skills, and contributions of all of the United States citizens. African American contributions to this country, the experience of slavery, and the struggle for freedom on the secretive Underground Railroad is central to the cultural history of African Americans.

The student has previously experienced many selections of historical fiction on the Underground Railroad. The focus of these lessons were the skills necessary for a slave to have to successfully run to freedom. Within this analytical framework, students are familiar with the inner workings of the Underground Railroad, the specialized knowledge of the runaways, and the major conductors.

Although the student has an excellent competency of the inner workings of the Underground Railroad, historical fiction does not allow the student to learn about the real life struggle of ordinary people who chose to run. They continue to ask the question, "well did things really happen, and did this person really live"? The following activities attempt to address this short coming.

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: 7 Days

A Brief Description of the Activities

Day One:

Students will review facts they know about the Underground Railroad. Students will participate in a whole class discussion.

Burning Question:
Since we know so much about the Underground Railroad and how it works, how do you think the runaway slaves shared their stories with others?

In cooperative learning cells students will develop vinn diagrams of how they know about things that happened in the past and how slaves would know about things about the past.

Groups will share their diagrams. The whole class will be asked to comment on the appropriateness of the responses based upon their expertise in the area. Teacher will ask the students why reading and writing of information was not listed on the slaves portion of the chart. Students will remind their peers that many slaves did not know how to read and write because it was forbidden by law.

Students will compare and contrast the two means of sharing history. Teacher will highlight all the cooperative learning group's responses to how slaves share their history. This new chart will be saved and used to launch the next day's activities.

Day Two:

Burning Question: If the runaway's stories weren't written down in books are they still history?

Review the process from Day One. Review the chart of student's responses on how slaves shared their histories.

Students will be told that they are going to talk about an important way in which slaves shared information. Students will learn that narrative is when someone tells another person about an important time in their life or an event that happened in the past.

Students will be shown books written by award winning contemporary children's author Virginia Hamilton. The class will read a selection by Hamilton about her grandfather and the information he shared with his family about his experience on the Underground Railroad. "Grandpaw's Story" is an excerpt from a Hamilton interview, Something About the Author, Vol.56, 1989.

Children will tell why they think this story is a narrative or why they think this story is not a narrative.

Children will list their criteria for a narrative.

Children will tell why they think this story is history and why or why not they think this story is not history.

Children will write the criteria for history.

Is this story still a narrative even though it has now been written down?

History can be written or oral. Narrative is an oral history that can later be written in books, newspapers, letters, or magazines.

Outside homework project: Talk to your grandparent or a senior about their history. Ask them to tell you about an event or an important time in their life when they were your age. Write down their story and include it in their class book of oral narratives.

Day Three:

Burning Question? How can Virginia Hamilton be sure that what her grandpa told the family was the truth?

Many of the important facts in a narrative can be investigated.

Students will break into their cooperative learning groups.

Students will re-read Virginia Hamilton's story.

Students will make a chart of all the facts they would want to check out as an Underground Railroad specialist.

Groups will report on the things they could check on to validate the narrative.

Teacher will chart all responses.

Day Four:

Burning Question: What's a Primary Source?

Teacher will review the chart of facts the children would want to investigate to see if there is any validity to Virginia Hamilton's grandpa's narrative.

Primary Sources can be books, documents, letters, newspapers, photographs, songs, and artifacts that tell us about people, events or places in history. Many times these Primary Sources are very old because they come from the time of the person or the event.

Teacher will use materials from URL's Special Collection and other sources to assist the children in their investigation.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Documents to be shared on Day Four:

- A poster of a map of the Underground Railroad route crossing the Ohio River at Ripley, Ohio.
- A color photograph of the light in the window and the bell used to direct the runaways to this important station.
- A color photograph of the Rankin House on Liberty Hill
- A color photograph of the crossing points on the Ohio River.
- A book of letters John Rankin wrote to his brother, a slave holder about the wickedness of slavery in 1883.
- A copy of an actual letter written by abolitionist Rankin.

Students will assess whether or not they think Hamilton's grandpa was telling the truth about his experience on the Underground Railroad.

Homework: Bring your narrative about your grandparent or another senior to school tomorrow to share.

Day Five:

Burning Question: Can we use Primary Sources today?

As a whole group activity, children will be told to think of what events, people, or places could be investigated in their classmate's narrative. Students will take a few minutes to share their narratives.

What types of Primary Sources could assist your peer in his or her investigation.

Children will note the suggestions for their narrative.

The Homework Assignment is to locate the Primary Sources that you can use to support the narrative you shared today. Be prepared to make another report to the class in one week and show your Primary Sources.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Day Six and Seven:

Students will read a short story from Virginia Hamilton's, *The People Could Fly.*

Hamilton calls "Carrying the Running-Aways" a "reality tale of freedom". Students will be asked to carefully find all the elements of this narrative that are the same as her Grandpa's story. They will also need to find all the elements of the "reality tale" that can be proven with Primary Sources. An excerpt from this story is attached.

Burning Questions:

If this story were shared with other slaves who were not yet free, which parts of this tale would be instructive?

Why do you think narratives were so important to the runaways?

Are there any other ways that slaves could have communicated their histories?

Discuss William Still's 1872 book *Underground Railroad.*
Can you imagine why this free Black man collected over 800 Slave Narratives?

Extended Enrichment Activities

Student's narratives will be edited and re-written. Students can illustrate these stories. Narratives will be part of a classroom museum on Family Narratives with Primary Source support.

Students will develop other means of sharing slave information about their lives and times that do not entail the ability to read and write. Song, rap, dance, art, crafts, and theatrical presentation are some possibilities.

Students can tell their own narratives about important events in their lives. Students will add their own Primary Sources to support their stories.

Students will write a narrative about an event that the entire class experienced. Students will share their narratives and compare and contrast their individual stories.

Assessment:

Read student's homework for an understanding of narratives and the theme of oral history being a valid means of recording the past.

Students exhibit in the Family Narrative Museum should reflect the addition of Primary Sources collected to support their story.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bial, Raymond. The Underground Railroad, 1995.

Brandt, Paula. "Passing Stories On". Book Links, March, 1995

Coleman, Evelyn. The Footwarmer and the Crow. 1994

Connell, Kate. Tales from the Underground Railroad. 1992

Commire, Anne, ed. Something About the Author. Vol. 56, 1989

Hamilton, Virginia. Anthony Burns. 1988
Many Thousand Gone,1993
The People Could Fly,1992

Hopkinson, Deborah. Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt. 1993

Haskins, Jim. Get on Board. 1993

Monjo, F.N. The Drinking Gourd. 1970

Porter, Connie. Meet Addy.1993

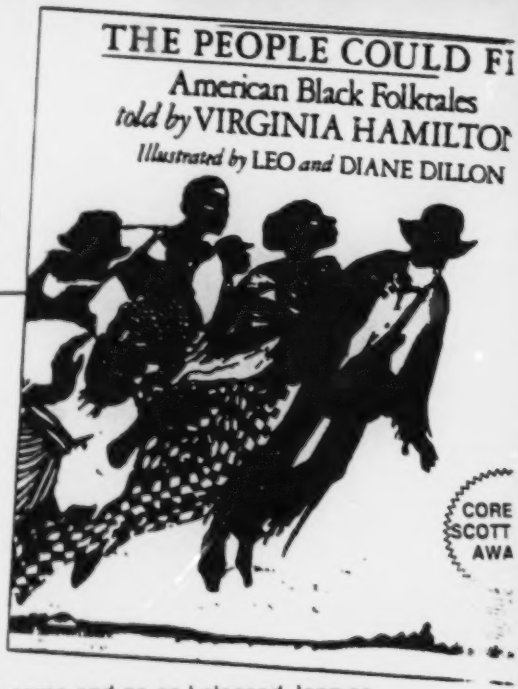
Ringgold, Faith. Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky. 1992

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Celebrate African-American History Month

BOOK EXCERPT

Here is an excerpt from *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*, offered on Arrow this month. Share it with your class to raise their interest in this outstanding collection of stories compiled by Newbery Medal–winning author Virginia Hamilton and illustrated by Caldecott Medal winners Leo and Diane Dillon.

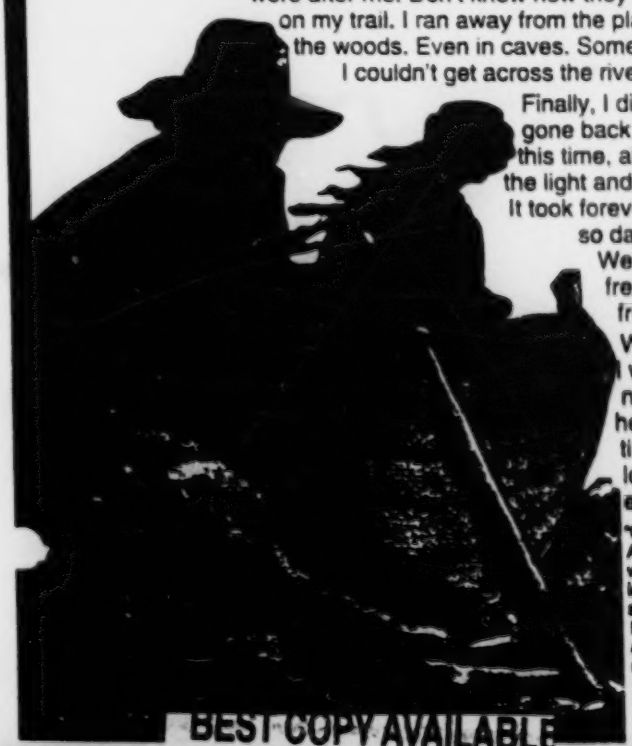


Carry the Running-Aways

Never had any idea of carryin the runnin-away slaves over the river. Even though I was right there on the plantation, right by that big river, it never got in my mind to do somethin like that. But one night the woman whose house I had gone courtin to said she knew a pretty girl wanted to cross the river and would I take her. Well, I met the girl and she was awful pretty. And soon the woman was tellin me how to get across, how to go, and when to leave.

Well, I had to think about it. But each day, that girl or the woman would come around, ask me would I row the girl across the river to a place called Ripley. Well, I finally said I would. And one night I went over to the woman's house. My owner trusted me and let me come and go as I pleased, long as I didn't try to read or write anythin. For writin and readin was forbidden to slaves.Now, I had heard about the o side of the river from the other slaves. But I thought it was just like the side where we lived on the plantation. I thought there were slaves and masters over there, too, and overseers and rawhide whips they used on us. T why I was so scared. I thought I'd land the girl over there and some overseer didn't know us would beat us for out at night. They could do that, you know.

Well, I did it. Oh, it was a long rowin time in the cold, with me worryin. But pretty soon I see a light way up high Then I remembered the woman told me to watch for a light. Told me to row to the light, which is what I did. And when I got to it, there were two men. They reached down and grabbed the girl. Then one of the men took me by the arm. Said, "You about hungry?" And if he hadn't been holdin me, I would of fell out of that rowboat....I worked hard and almost got caught. I'd been rowin fugitives for almost four years. It was in 1863 and it was a night I carried twelve runnin-aways across the river to Mr. Rankins'. I stepped out of the boat back in Kentucky and they were after me. Don't know how they found out. But the slave catchers, didn't know them, were on my trail. I ran away from the plantation and all who I knew there. I lived in the fields and in the woods. Even in caves. Sometimes I slept up in the tree branches. Or in a hay pile. I couldn't get across the river now, it was watched so closely.



Finally, I did get across. Late one night me and my wife went. I had gone back to the plantation to get her. Mr. Rankins had him a bell by this time, along with the light. We were rowin and rowin. We could see the light and hear that bell, but it seemed we weren't gettin any closer. It took forever, it seemed. That was because we were scared and it was so dark and we knew we could get caught and never get gone. Well, we did get there. We pulled up there and went on to freedom. It was only a few months before all the slaves was freed.

We didn't stay on at Ripley. We went on to Detroit because I wasn't takin any chances. I have children and grandchildren now. Well, you know, the bigger ones don't care so much to hear about those times. But the little ones, well, they never get tired of hearin how their grandpa brought emancipation to loads of slaves he could touch and feel in the dark but never ever see.

"Carrying the Running-Aways" is a reality tale of freedom, a true slave narrative. Another fugitive, Levi Perry, born a slave, crossed the Ohio River into freedom with his mother about 1854. They were rescued by John Rankin and were taken in and taken care of at the house with the light. Years later, every six months or so, Levi Perry would settle his ten children around him and he would begin: "Now listen, children. I want to tell you about slavery and how my mother and I ran away from it. So you'll know and never let it happen to you." This tale was told to me by my mother, Etta Belle Perry Hamilton, who was 92 years old and Levi Perry's eldest daughter.

Virginia Hamilton

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"Grandpaw's Story"
by Virginia Hamilton

"There's the story I remember always knowing about my Grandpa Levi Perry and how his hand burned shut from a fire in the gunpowder mill where he worked. And from the time that his life and mine coincided, his hand was a fist with burn scars hidden in the tightly shut palm. I would lace my fingers over his fist when I was a child, and he would lift me up, swing me around and around- to my enormous delight...."

" One of my uncles, on my mother's side made an annual pilgrimage down to Ripley, Ohio to the John Rankin House. John Rankin and his nine sons were Presbyterian abolitionists, former southerners who hated slavery. Their house stood high on Liberty Hill with a light and a bell for slaves coming across to freedom. My Grandpa Perry was brought north by his mother, who then promptly disappeared. She was believed to be a conductor on the Underground Railroad. I believe she was caught on one of her many trips. She was never heard from again...."

"My grandpa sat his children down once a year and told them the story. 'This was what slavery was like, and why I ran away... I am telling you so that it will never happen to you.' He made an enormous impression on my mother...."

Something About the Author, Anne Commire, ed.
Volume 56, 1989, p 61.